DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 583 EA 017 108

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TITLE Instructional Management Academy.
PUB DATE Jun 84
NOTE 6p.; In: "Making Our Schools More Effective: Proceedings of Three State Conferences." See EA 017 101.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Evaluation; Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership Training; *Management Development; Peer Evaluation; *Principals; *Professional Development; Program Guides; School Supervision; *Supervisory Training
IDENTIFIERS Far West Laboratory for Educational R and D CA

ABSTRACT

This paper briefly describes the rationale, aims, and proposed activities of an instructional management academy conducted by the Instructional Management Program at Far West Laboratory. The first academy, conducted during the 1983-1984 school year, allowed participating principals to analyze their management behavior, receive support and insight from working with colleagues, and learn what other principals were doing in their schools. A schedule of activities proposed for each of six future academy meetings are presented. These activities include "shadowing" others' actions, reflective interviews with partners, group discussion, identification of themes, preliminary models, and a final model formulated by consensus, showing connections between the school context, management behaviors, and student outcomes. Information is also provided on time commitment expectations and follow-up efforts. A diagram of school organiztion and management interaction is included. (TE)

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INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT ACADEMY

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For the past two years the Instructional Management Program at Far West Laboratory has been investigating the role of the school principal. We have conducted intensive case studies in 17 elementary and secondary schools, and have interviewed over 100 principals. Our purpose has been to improve general knowledge about the principal's role in the hope that we can provide alternative models of leadership for principals who work in different kinds of schools and who hold different expectations for their students.

Our work demonstrates that successful principals:

- Can and do affect instructional programs
- Exercise their influence through routine management activities
- Take a wholistic view of their role by linking their management actions to their views of schooling and the needs of students
- Differ in the ways they approach instructional management

In addition, we have found that principals feel isolated and value the opportunity to talk with other people interested in their role. For this reason, the Instructional Management Program is continuing to conduct Instructional Management Academies. The first of these involved several groups of principals from different school districts during the 1983-1984 school year. The aims of the Academy are to allow participants an opportunity to:

- Analyse their management behavior through the processes of shadowing and reflective interviewing
- Receive support and insight from working with colleagues
- Learn what other principals are doing in their schools

Proposed Activities

Several Academy meetings will be held during the year to allow principals to gather information from each other about activities they perform on a day-to-day basis. The schedule of meetings is as follows:

Meeting 1: Principals will be taught how to "shadow" another principal by recording narrative field notes. These records are not an evaluation of principals' actions, but a descriptive account of what they do. Each principal will be required to conduct a shadow with his/her partner before the second meeting.

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Meeting 2: Participants will learn how to use their shadow field notes to conduct a "reflective interview" with their partners. A reflective interview is conducted after each shadow and helps to clarify the observed events and the meanings principals attach to these events. Participants will practice forming "preliminary" reflective interview questions which provide useful background information about their partners' schools and their roles as instructional leaders. From this point on, at least one additional shadow and reflective interview will be conducted before each subsequent meeting.

Meeting 3: In order to determine how principal pairs are doing with their observations and interviews, the group will reconvene to discuss how the activities are proceeding. Suggestions for improvement and/or refinement will be made. Additional techniques for forming "advanced" reflective interview questions will be taught and practiced.

Meeting 4: Using data from previous shadows and reflective interviews, participants will begin to identify specific "themes" that are emerging in their partners' schools. Once these themes are identified, principal pairs will determine what information is needed to investigate these themes more fully. Subsequent shadows will be scheduled so that more specific data can be gathered.

Meeting 5: In conjunction with their partners, principals will use the information that has been collected during the previous shadows and reflective interviews to construct a preliminary model which provides a picture of their partners' schools and roles as principals. Participants will have the opportunity to react and respond to the models that their partners are composing.

Meeting 6: Based on their partners' reactions to their preliminary models, principals will formulate a final model. These completed models will follow our general framework, but will include individual variations and unique connections between the school context, instructional management behaviors, school climate, instructional organization, and student outcomes. Models will be shared among group members in order to show similarities and differences among principals and school situations.

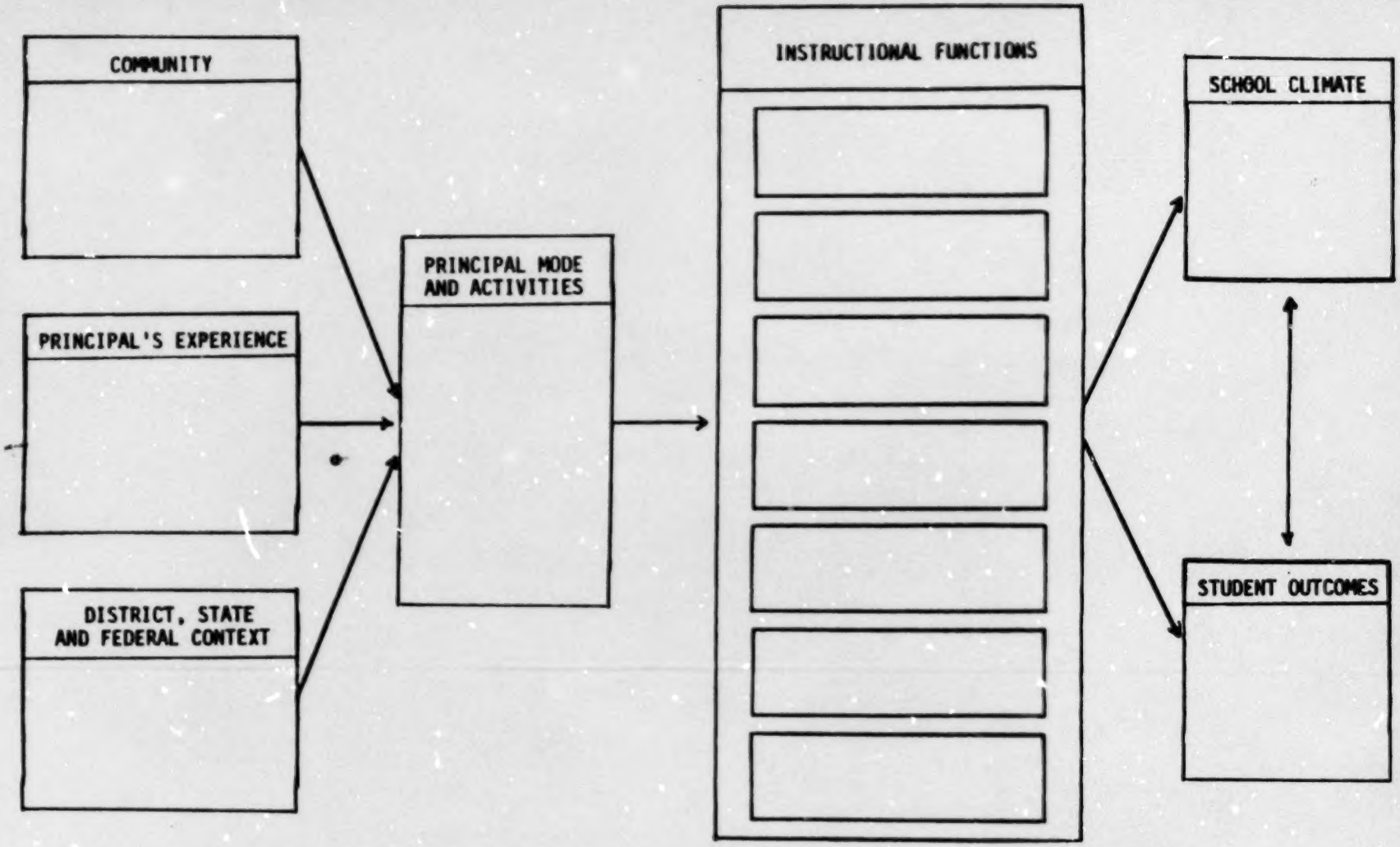
Time Commitment

The series of meetings, shadows, reflective interviews, and model generation should take about 13 or 14 days of a principal's time over the course of the year. Meetings will last an entire day. Each shadow should take about four hours, and the reflective interview another hour. It is anticipated that each participant will conduct 5 or 6 shadows/reflective interviews during the year. Because of the time commitment and intensity of this project, it is recommended to principals and school districts that this constitute the major professional development activity during the school year.

Continued Efforts

The needs and interests of the Academy participants will determine what, if any, second year activities might be appropriate. For example, at the conclusion of the first year, two options for continued follow-up might be pursued. First, if some participants feel the shadowing process is useful, we can begin to design a program whereby Academy principals become trainers for other principals interested in learning these techniques. Second, some participants might find this collegial group of principals to be a useful support group for discussing topics of interest or concern. As a topic arises, we can arrange for other principals (ones we have identified as part of our ongoing work with principals) to attend Academy sessions to provide some insight and guidance. Between meetings, principals might be shadowed and interviewed, thus allowing them the opportunity to reflect on how they are dealing with this issue in their own schools. In all cases, any continuing efforts will be determined collaboratively with principals interested in expanding the processes initiated during the first year.

The following diagram was used to lead participants through a group exercise which illustrates how all the components in the figure might influence a desired student outcome. The figure itself was derived from our research.



Principals can understand and influence the varied elements of their organizations through the performance of routine activities. Their success hinges on their ability to connect their actions to an overarching perspective of their school settings and their aspirations for students.